

SPIRITUALITY OF LENT

**I traipsed slowly in single file,
down the centre isle.**

**The priest's mumble soon to learn,
"You are dust", and he smeared my brow.
"And to dust you shall return".**

**Once more into Lent I tread.
Carrying that refrain of dread.
"And to dust you shall return".
Ever brutal and ever frank.
"And to dust you shall return".**

**How to escape that dread?
Drown myself in the Godhead
And so, to You I will return
Live in me, and I will never be dead.
And so, to You I will return.
And so, to You I will return.**

Ash Wednesday John J. Roche

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Introduction



Lent begins on a day we call *Ash Wednesday*. It is the most honest day of the year because it literally hits us, right in the face (so to speak), with a stark reality - everything material will one day be dust, including ourselves! Yes, it makes us face up to our own mortality; for the only sure things in life is death and taxes.

It is good to contemplate that one day we will be no longer on this earth. So it forces us to ponder – ***What therefore,***

are the important things in life? As the Preface of the Requiem Mass reminds us that when we die *“Life is changed not ended”*. We enter a new mode of being. We see this change in nature; caterpillars becoming butterflies. Cecil B DeMille writes in his autobiography that one day he went fishing to think about a movie he was making. His mind was more on the movie than the fish. At some point a water beetle perched itself on top of the side wall of the boat. A couple of hours later the back of the beetle split open and out popped a dragon fly and flew away. DeMille’s reflection was – *“if that is what God does for a lowly beetle, how much more will he do for us”!*

In the next stage of our being, the only thing that we carry over with us is our relationships, with God and others. If they are the only things that survive



Some are proud



Others not so proud

this present life on earth, what does that tell us now? The Church gives us this season of Lent to reflect on this and how the sacrifice of the Lord brings us to new life.

To ponder on this reality, is to embark upon the Spirituality of Lent. We can mechanically observe Lent by giving up chocolate, or the like, but that is really only tokenism. To ponder the ultimate realities of life probes the perennial questions of humans; who am I, what is the purpose of life... Our faith helps us to resolve some of these questions.



Our faith gives us something the ancient philosophers were denied; revealed truths from God. The revelation of God gives us answers the philosophers could never reach merely by human thinking. Lent is much more than denying ourselves something for forty days, it is about uniting ourselves with God through Jesus; learning to be obedient to the Father's will and making the Father's will the most central thing in our life. To do that we have to conquer many temptations.

An article I found pertinent to this line of thought follows:

My Deepest Me Is God

January 2015 issue of [The Monastic Way](#) by Joan Chittister.

In the center of us all, guiding and calling, prodding and poking at the lassitude in our souls, the fear in our hearts, the fretting at the bottom of our minds, lies the spark of life that we recognize most clearly as "my-self." This is the "me" that is always there in its rawest form. The "me" of all my distant hopes and all my controlling feelings. This is the "person" that I know myself to be—whether anyone else knows that part of me or not.

The recognition of this self in me is the beginning of the spiritual life. With it comes the awareness of what we call the "true" self. This is the me, the one who is the vessel of both my inmost feelings, positive and negative, and my most illuminating, most uncensored, insights into my reason for being, my place in the universe, my relationship with God.

This innermost self is the raw material of our spirituality. It signals the demons with which we struggle our way through life and it identifies the angels of our better nature who carry us from one level of the self to the next. In our "deepest" we know the best and the weakest of our spiritual selves. In this place we can see where our heart really lies in life and we can name the demons with which we wage our daily wars to be better, to do good, to live with clay feet on a divine path.



Our "deepest" is clearly where the real me drives me on from desire to desire. Our inner talk there is about ourselves. Our concerns, down deep, are too commonly only for ourselves. Our struggles emerge there out of the dreams and disappointments, the demands and the denials we breed with ourselves in mind. But not Catherine of Genoa's. Her "deepest" is God. Her center of life is God. Her awareness of her basic self is her understanding of Emmanuel, God with us, always, in her.

The thought stuns us into a new awareness of the nature of our own lives. Here is a woman who knew without doubt that the God she sought was the God who was her very breath itself. When she turned to the "self" within she discovered the God who had created her, sustained her and drew her on through life.

Unusual? Not really.

The fact is that our "deepest" is God, too. Only it takes most of us years to discover that. The process is a profound one



The Spirituality of Lent provides us with an opportunity to sound out our deepest selves and to discover that God resides right at the core of our being: "I know you through and through for I knit you together in your mother's womb" Ps 139.

LIGHT A CANDLE FOR
THIS YEAR'S DEARLY
DEPARTED LOVED ONES

